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SUBJECT: (SBU) AFGHANISTAN: HAJJ TRANSPORT DEMARCHE

REF: STATE 190219

(SBU) In response to reftel, David Ellis of the FCO Afghanistan Group told Poloff November 22 that President Karzai's office had approached the UK Embassy in Kabul in very vague terms about possible problems obtaining Saudi approval for leased aircraft to transport pilgrims to the Hajj, but the Afghans provided no specifics. Ellis commented that providing support "on a reimbursable basis" would be tantamount to "taking from our left pocket to pay into our right pocket," given that "we are bankrolling the Afghan government." He also remarked that NATO is in no position to help.

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